

YOUR AVONBRIDGE & STANDBURN **COMMUNITY**

AVONBRIDGE AND STANDBURN AREA COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS (OUTCOMES AND PROPOSALS)



Produced with the support
of CARES, the Local Energy
Challenge Fund



Standburn Community Park
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CONTENTS

Section	Page No	
1	Introduction and Background	4-7
2	Avonbridge and Standburn Area Profile.....	8-13
3	Strengths and Challenges.....	14-18
4	Themes, Proposed Projects and Actions	19-24
5	Next Steps	25-26
	Appendix A:	
	Public Consultation - Methodology.....	28-29
	Appendix B:	
	Public Consultation - Results	30-33
	Appendix C:	
	Public Consultation Leaflet/Questionnaire	34
	Appendix D:	
	Local News Release	35



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

What is Community Planning?

1.1 Community Planning is a means of establishing what local people would like for their area, aiming to ensure that those who live and work there can enjoy a good quality of life, both now and in the future.

1.2 Community Planning in the UK exists in many different forms and covers many different types of place - cities, towns, villages and rural areas - but all Community Planning processes have certain elements in common:

- They take into account the views of all sections of the community
- They establish what local people value most about their community
- They establish local needs and wishes for making things better
- They include an Action Plan containing specific identified projects
- These projects bring together public agencies, the voluntary sector and local people, working in partnership and sharing resources

1.3 Community Planning can be carried out by different types of organisations, ranging from large local authorities to small voluntary groups, but experience around the country has shown that irrespective of who leads the exercise, the most effective and successful processes are those which engage and involve local people - not just during the research and analysis period, but also on an ongoing basis thereafter.

1.4 The existence of a Community Planning process does not in itself mean that things will automatically happen. Often, but not always, a written Community Plan is produced, but this simply provides a framework for action - widespread community involvement and commitment will be required to actually deliver the desired improvements, with energetic local groups and individuals coming forward to lead and develop specific projects.

What are the benefits of Community Planning?

1.5 Places which have already experienced successful Community Planning processes report a wide range of benefits, including, for example:

- A better quality of life (sometimes resulting from very small and simple projects)
- More active citizenship and civic pride
- Communities taking more responsibility for developing their own services, enterprises and social economies
- Local people becoming more confident in their abilities to help shape their own lives
- The area's image improving, along with greater economic investment
- Young people becoming more likely to stay in the area, thereby providing continuity, stability and a sense of togetherness in the community

Community Planning in the Avonbridge and Standburn area

- 1.6** In May 2017, following a competitive tendering exercise, Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council (funded entirely by CARES, the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme) appointed consultants to undertake a Community Planning process for the Avonbridge and Standburn area.
- 1.7** The Community Council's desired outcome was to create a published document setting out a series of proposals and actions, all to be 'owned' entirely by local people. Whilst it was recognised that the document would not have any 'official' or legal status, it would still nevertheless reflect local opinions and aspirations and would encourage greater participation in community life.
- 1.7** The Community Council's working party required the consultants to:
- (a)** Carry out desktop research to identify key socio-economic information about the area;
 - (b)** Conduct a comprehensive programme of community engagement and consultation;
 - (c)** Then, based on the findings of (a) and (b), produce a document which would identify themes and priorities for action in the short, medium and long terms.
- 1.8** The methodology followed by the consultants, and samples of their consultative materials, are set out in Appendix A.
- 1.9** Various draft versions of the Community Plan were distributed to local consultees and stakeholders for comments during August and September 2017. The feedback received helped to shape the finalised Plan, which was completed in late September 2017.
- 1.10** It is important to stress that the activities outlined in this document will not be delivered or managed by Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council and for that reason, it is stressed that **it will be up to local people themselves to come together to establish working parties and project groups to take forward the projects identified.**
- 1.11** One of the document's principal uses will be to inform and guide decisions being taken about the dispensing of the EDF-ER Burnhead Moss Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund. This fund will provide c £35,000 per annum (rising in line with inflation) to the Avonbridge and Standburn area until at least 2036. It is also intended that the document can be used to support funding applications to other external bodies.

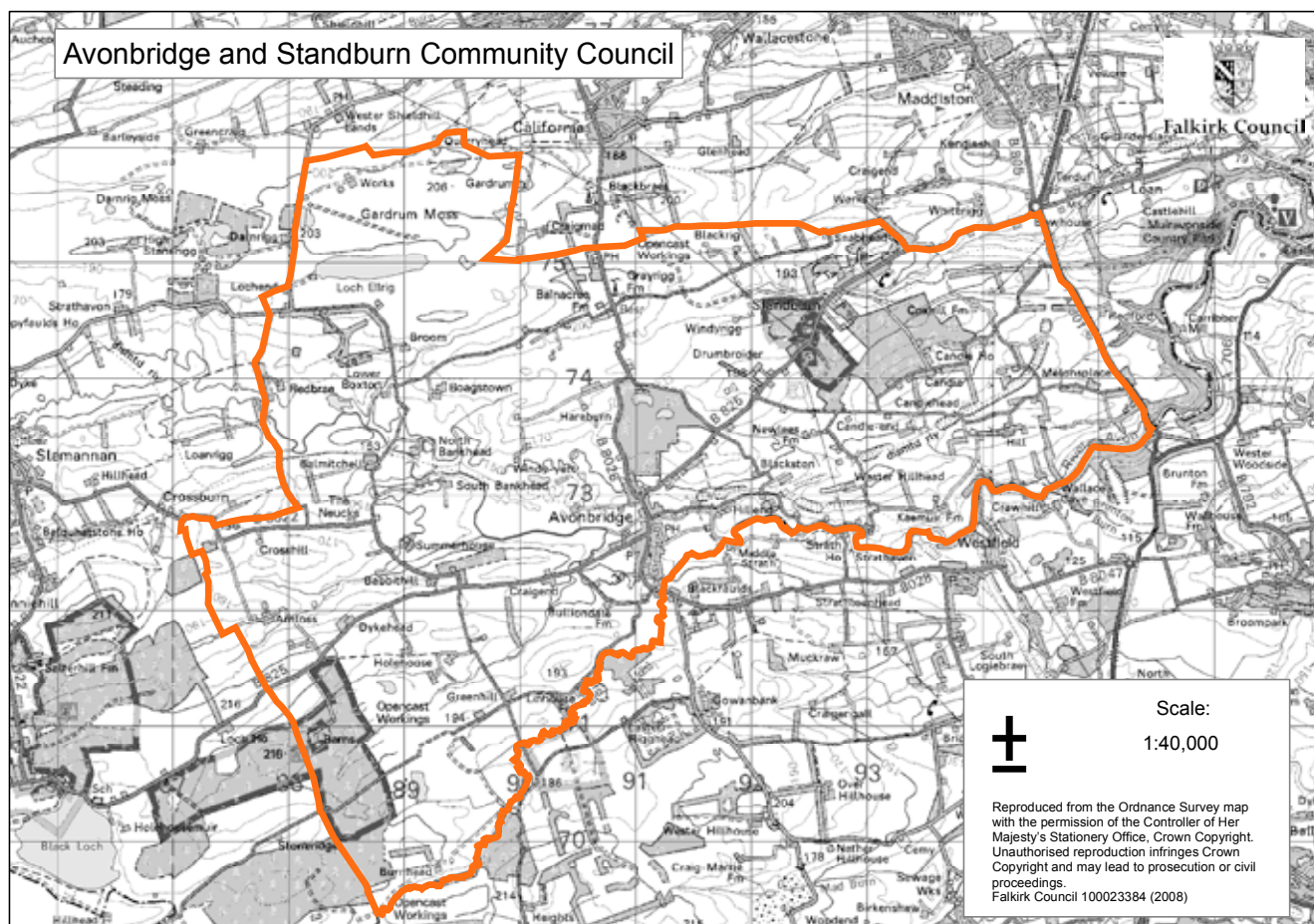


AVONBRIDGE AND STANDBURN AREA PROFILE



SECTION 2 - AVONBRIDGE AND STANDBURN AREA PROFILE

- 2.1** This Community Plan covers the area served by Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council - approximately 60 square miles (155 km²), lying to the south of Falkirk in central Scotland (see map below). The phrase “the Avonbridge district” is used herein as a shorthand title for the area.



- 2.2** This is a small but very varied district. Fringed by the peaceful River Avon, the undulating landscape includes woodlands, arable fields and boglands, former industrial sites and a large wind farm. The population is small (an estimated 1,335 people in 2017) with some 50% of them living in the main settlement of Avonbridge, around 10% living in Standburn village and the remaining 40% dispersed across the rural parts of the district.

- 2.3** The local economy has changed considerably in recent decades. For much of the 19th and 20th Centuries, the economy was based on coal mining (especially around Standburn, which had several mines) whilst Avonbridge also had a large brick works and a quarry, but all such heavy industry has now disappeared. There is one local employer of note, a haulage company based in Avonbridge, but otherwise the economy is based mainly around agriculture, forestry and related services. Most employed people from the district travel to workplaces elsewhere in central Scotland.

- 2.4** The small and scattered population is probably the reason for the relatively low number of community groups and organisations based in the area. The following exist:
- Two churches in Avonbridge (Church of Scotland and United Reformed Church)
 - A Community Hall in Avonbridge, with its own management committee
 - A Mother and Toddlers Club in Avonbridge Community Hall
 - A Kids Club in Avonbridge Community Hall
 - Parent Councils for both Avonbridge and Drumbowie (Standburn) Primary Schools
 - A Social Lunch Club for older people, meeting at the United Reformed Church Hall
 - Drumbowie Environmental Action Group, which manages Drumbowie Park
 - Avonbridge Community Gardening Club
 - Avon Valley Angling Association
 - Avonbridge Homing Society (racing pigeons)

There are no known sports teams or similar. Youth groups for older children/teenagers have recently ceased to exist, as has the former Avonbridge Regeneration Group.

Statistical Data

- 2.5** Much of the data considered below is sourced from Scotland's Census 2011, with updated estimates supplied by National Records of Scotland/ Falkirk Council (NB the data-capture geographical boundaries used by the Census and other agencies do not tie in exactly with the Community Plan's boundaries, especially around its northern edge, but the differences are minor and not statistically significant).

- 2.6 Population** - the 2011 Census recorded a population of 1,283 living in 555 households. It is estimated that the district's population has grown by around 4% since then, with most of these additional people living outwith the district's two villages. In 2011, the Avonbridge district (like the Falkirk Council area overall) had more children, fewer people of working age and fewer older people than Scotland as a whole, but the median age of 41 was exactly the same as for Scotland overall:

UNDER 16S



19.4%

254 people

17.3%

Scotland

16 TO 24



65.8%

862 people

65.9%

Scotland

65 AND OVER



14.7%

193 people

16.8%

Scotland

In several parts of the district, 34-35% of households contain dependent children - considerably above the (Scottish average of 24.5%).

- 2.7 Ethnicity** - there is very little ethnic or racial diversity in the Avonbridge district, which in 2011 was over 99% white (Scotland 96%). Moreover, the large majority of the district's white residents (c 91%) are 'white Scottish' (Scotland 87.4%).

2.8 Health - The health quality of the local community in the 2011 Census was slightly poorer than the Scottish average:

49.9% reported “very good” health (Scotland 52.5%) and

5.7% reported “bad” or “very bad” health (Scotland 5.6%).

Health statistics broken down to the Avonbridge district level are not published, but there is no reason to suppose that these would differ greatly from the figures for the ‘Braes Villages’ data zone (which includes neighbouring communities such as California and Slamannan). These show life expectancies of 76.6 (men) and 79.7 (women) - the Scotland-wide figures being 76.6 and 80.8 respectively - and similarly near-Scottish-average incidences of cancer, heart disease, emergency hospitalisations and road traffic injuries.

2.9 Employment - in 2011, there were 948 residents in the Avonbridge district aged 16-74. Of these,

26.0% (Scotland 28.9%) had higher or lower managerial/administrative/professional jobs,

23.8% (Scotland 20.3%) had intermediate/small employer jobs,

38.8% (Scotland 36.8%) had technical/routine/semi-routine jobs,

5.2% (Scotland 5.0 %) were long-term unemployed and

6.4% (Scotland 9.0%) were full-time students.

There are very few employment opportunities in the district, and so the vast majority of residents who are of working age commute to Falkirk or beyond. Conversely, many of the staff working for the one local employer of any size, Stevenson Bros Haulage, commute into the district.

2.10 Other Economic Indicators - In 2015, **13.4%** of ‘Braes Villages’ residents of working age were claiming out of work benefits and **8.7%** of those aged over 60 were claiming pension benefits - significantly more than the Scottish averages of 11.2% and 6.2% respectively.

In 2012, **21.3%** of ‘Braes Villages’ children were classed as living in poverty - significantly more than the Scotland-wide figure of 15.3%.

The median house price for the ‘Braes Villages’ data zone in 2015 was **£94,000** - considerably below the £115,000 figure for the Falkirk Council area and the **£146,200 for Scotland**.

70.1% of homes in the ‘Braes Villages’ data zone have Council Tax Bands A-C (60.4% in Scotland overall).

2.11 Education - in 2011, there were 1,029 residents in the Avonbridge district aged 16 or over. Of these,

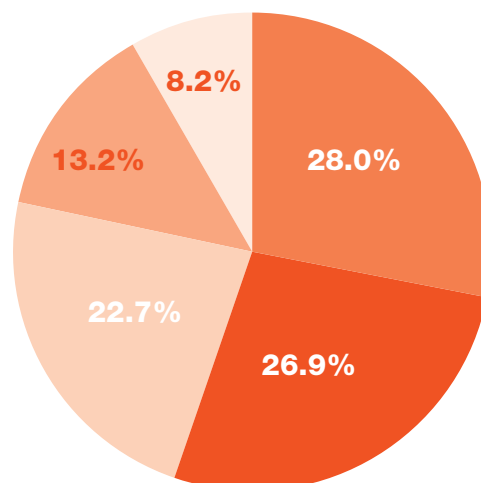
26.9% had no educational qualifications (Scotland 26.8%),

28.0% had Level 1 (O Grade/Standard Grade) qualifications (Scotland 23.1%),

13.2% had Level 2 (Higher/A Level) qualifications (Scotland 23.1%),


8.2% had Level 3 (HNC/HND) qualifications (Scotland 9.7%),


and **22.7%** had Level 4 (degree or above) qualifications (Scotland 26.1%).




2.12 Overall summary - by and large, the socio-economic profile of the Avonbridge district's population is similar to that of Scotland overall, but several of the indicators listed above do demonstrate that the district tends to lie below the Scottish average in terms of health, wealth and education. However, none of the constituent parts of the district are in the list of the 15% most deprived wards in Scotland (as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

2.13 It should also be noted that there are some notable variances when the statistics are disaggregated to the smallest data zone levels, some examples being:

- Up to **94.7%** of people in the area east of Avonbridge own their own homes (Scotland 62%)


Category	Value
Avonbridge	94.7%
Scotland	62%
- The proportion of householders living in a council house is as high as **69%** in parts of Avonbridge village (Scotland 13.2%)


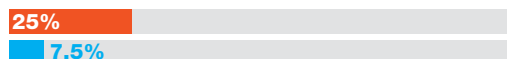
Category	Value
Avonbridge	69%
Scotland	13.2%
- In parts of Avonbridge, **84.9%** of people have no qualifications beyond O/Standard Grade (Scotland 49.9%)


Category	Value
Avonbridge	84.9%
Scotland	49.9%
- In Standburn, **34.5%** of economically inactive people aged 16 to 74 are long-term sick or disabled (more than double the national average) and the proportion is almost as high in parts of Avonbridge

- In the northern parts of the district, **100%** of households own a car/van (Scotland 69.5%)



- In the northern parts of the district, some **25%** of people are self-employed (Scotland 7.5%)



- In the eastern part of the district, the 2015 median house price was more than double the Falkirk Council average.

SUCH VARIANCES DEMONSTRATE THAT CENSUS AND OTHER DATA, EVEN FOR A SMALL DISTRICT LIKE THIS, CAN MASK CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCES AT THE MICRO-LEVEL. FOR EXAMPLE, THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE NORTHERN PART OF AVONBRIDGE VILLAGE IS MARKEDLY DIFFERENT TO THAT OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN PART - EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE ONLY TWO MINUTES' WALK APART.



STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES



SECTION 3 - STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

3.1 Appendix B (which should ideally be consulted before reading this section) sets out the main findings from the public consultation carried out in the Avonbridge and Standburn district during summer 2017. As can be seen, many issues and ideas - some of them very specific - were provided by respondents during the consultation process, and these views, when combined with the objective demographic and socio-economic data outlined above, allow an accurate picture of the area's strengths and challenges to be drawn up.

Strengths

3.2 There are very strong and positive feelings held about the **rural** nature of the area - almost every single respondent alluded to this in one way or another, whether it be the landscape, the views, the wildlife, the walks, or most of all the peace and quiet.

3.3 The vast majority of local people are perceived as being **friendly and helpful**. Though the number of community events held is not large, those that do take place are generally well-supported and enjoyed, demonstrating that a genuine sense of community does exist.

3.4 The area's **geographical location** is (by and large) viewed as a strength, affording good access to cities, workplaces and countryside attractions across Central Scotland.

3.5 There is no shortage of **realistic ideas** about projects which would improve people's everyday lives. Many of these are readily 'do-able', not requiring overwhelming sums of money or large amounts of people power.

3.6 Avonbridge and Standburn has a **financial advantage** not enjoyed by many small communities, namely the money being provided annually by the EDF-ER Burnhead Moss Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund - administered by Foundation Scotland. This money can be used for a wide variety of projects and, importantly, can be utilised as 'match funding', thereby allowing the projects concerned to apply for other grants and financial support.

Highland Cattle near Avonbridge © Catch the moment - Photography by Sandy



3.7 A number of local bodies, notably the two School Parent Councils, are already benefiting from Community Benefit Fund grants approved by Foundation Scotland, whilst c £3000 has already been distributed as 'micro-grants' (small sums of up to £150 from the same Fund but approved by the Community Council under delegated powers). A separate Education and Training Fund has already supported several local people with learning, training and re-entering the job market. These existing successes provide a good platform on which to build further, and show that the Fund distribution model currently in place is working effectively.

Challenges

3.8 One set of challenges often voiced by local residents can be grouped together using the phrase '**poor connectivity**' - whether that be infrequent and expensive bus services, the lack of mobile phone signals in some parts of the district, substandard broadband speeds or the non-availability of mains gas.

3.9 Another issue of concern to many can be summed up in the word '**safety**'; there are considerable levels of worry about road safety, and also reported instances of antisocial and inappropriate behaviour in public places.

3.10 The area, like many other parts of Scotland, **does not have a strong culture of community self-help**. In the past, residents have tended to rely on public agencies, particularly Falkirk Council, to provide solutions to local issues. In an era of reduced public sector capacity, **the Avonbridge and Standburn community now needs to become more self-reliant, self-confident and willing to take responsibility for its own outcomes.**



3.11 On a related note, the biggest challenge of all when it comes to implementing the actions described in this document is likely to be **shortage of community capacity**. If the Community Planning process is to have lasting beneficial effects, it will need the energy and enthusiasm of local people getting actively involved in the life of their community, either volunteering to help with one-off projects or participating in longer-term ways. However, with such a small population (when the very young and the very old are factored out, the district has little over 1,000 people) there is only a small pool of potential volunteers to draw upon. For the same reasons, the scope for large-scale fundraising locally is very limited, however worthwhile and popular a project might be. Having said that, there are some positive signs, such as the recent improvements made to Avonbridge Community Hall and the opening of the Avonbridge Community Café, which has created a new social hub for the area.

Conclusions

3.12 In conclusion, whilst there will be no shortage of problems to tackle, the community should also accentuate the positive by including actions which aim to build on the area's strengths and its existing communal activities such as schools, churches, the senior lunch club, village pub and the Community Hall.

3.13 However, it will be important that the community is realistic in its expectations; whilst it is good to have ambition and aspiration,

(a) a small rural community cannot be expected to address issues such as the provision of major infrastructure (e.g. the lack of mains gas); and

(b) the shortage of community capacity will present a real challenge. Therefore, especially in the early months and years, it will be better that a small number of projects are delivered well, rather than taking on too much.

3.14 This document contains proposed projects that can be delivered in the short term (1-2 years), medium term (2-4 years) and longer term (4 years and over). In the first year or two, the emphasis is deliberately on smaller-scale projects which will have tangible, visible outcomes. The successful delivery of such projects will boost local morale and foster the 'we can do it' spirit which will be necessary to take on the more ambitious actions set out for the medium and long terms.

3.15 As with any document of this nature, it will be important that it is updated and refreshed as circumstances change and new opportunities emerge. Therefore, regular monitoring and review of progress will be required.

THEMES, PROPOSED PROJECTS AND ACTIONS



SECTION 4 - THEMES, PROPOSED PROJECTS AND ACTIONS

4.1 Taking into account all of the preceding information, and also community feedback received during the post-consultation stage (see Appendix A, A.12), the following initial list of proposed projects and issues to be addressed has been drawn up (*NB - this initial project list only covers the next 4-5 years, as it is difficult to look further ahead in any detail*).

4.2 To provide some structure to the document, the projects have been grouped into five generic Themes (listed below in no implied order of importance). The Themes have been identified primarily because they reflect the views and priorities of local people, but also because of their longevity all of these matters will still be relevant in decades to come.

THEME 1 - IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT

4.3 This Theme includes activities which aim to protect, conserve and enhance the district's natural and built environments. The outcome will be that current and future residents - and visitors - can enjoy a cleaner, more attractive and appealing area. This Theme's actions will take place in the short, middle and long terms.

(a) Fly-tipping and litter is a blight on the Avonbridge and Standburn rural landscape, and is a major issue for many people. Tackling it effectively will require a co-ordinated response from both the community and Falkirk Council - and Falkirk Environment Trust might well offer financial support. The planned approach would see a squad(s) of local volunteers firstly compiling a 'hit list' of locations, then carrying out targeted clean-ups, supported logistically by the Council. Thereafter, a new 'quick reporting and tidy-up' regime, backed by more rigorous policing, should see the problems reduced considerably.

(b) Standburn Community Park is one of the area's major community-owned assets. With further investment, together with revitalisation of the charity which owns and is responsible for the land (Drumbowie Environmental Action Trust), the Park could become even more appealing. It is very clear, however, that new Trustees and volunteers are urgently required.

(c) Avonbridge War Memorial sits on a somewhat forlorn piece of land in the village centre. This would be a good location for an environmental enhancement project carried out by local volunteers, perhaps incorporating new planting, block pavers and an interpretation/orientation board telling the history of Avonbridge.

(d) The 'Community Garden' planted area at Bridgehill in Avonbridge, which lies adjacent to bus stops and the start of the River Avon Heritage Trail, could also become an attractive gateway point for the village. Planting could be further upgraded, with a regular maintenance regime put in place and a local map/orientation board and benches installed for the benefit of visitors.

(e) Village Garden Tidy-Up campaign - the visual appeal of both Avonbridge, and to a lesser extent Standburn, is adversely affected by a small minority of residents who have very untidy gardens. An annual clean-up week could be held, with skip(s) hired to allow residents to dispose of unwanted bulky materials from their gardens, with volunteer assistance provided if required.



Avonbridge Play Park



Avonbridge War Memorial



Avonbridge Community Garden



Avonbridge Sports Court

THEME 2 - MAKING OUR COMMUNITY SAFER

4.4 The outcomes of this Theme will be that physical hazards are identified and tackled and that antisocial behaviours are reduced, allowing all local residents to lead safer, more secure lives. This Theme's actions will take place principally in the middle term.

(a) Road safety throughout the district is perceived as a major problem, with the principal routes of concern being the B8028 through Avonbridge village and the B825 between Avonbridge and Standburn - both of which pass by primary schools. Most worries relate to traffic speeds, with general roads maintenance in winter also a concern. A working party involving Falkirk Council, the police and the local community could be set up to plan and deliver active traffic calming measures at the most hazardous locations - likely to involve a mix of solutions including engineering, enforcement and education. Safer roads will also complement Theme 4.

(b) Various antisocial and inappropriate activities in public places are being experienced (with certain known locations particularly prone to this) and yet, for various reasons, people are often reluctant to make complaints to the police. Problems being experienced include trail bikes in the countryside, sexual activity in public and casual religious bigotry. A review of these problems is required (In conjunction with Police Scotland), followed by renewed and ongoing action to reduce such offending.

(c) Community Policing - there is widespread support for the concept of community policing, but in practice the policy does not appear to be working as well as it might, due mainly to frequent changes of police personnel. Officers are not in post long enough to get to know the community properly (and vice versa). This situation needs to be discussed with Police Scotland.

THEME 3 - ENJOYING OUR COUNTRYSIDE

4.5 This Theme is about maintaining and improving access to the countryside for sport, recreation and enjoyment. The outcomes will be improved health and a better quality of life. This Theme's actions will take place principally in the short and middle terms.

(a) Public paths for walking, cycling and horse-riding are not as prevalent in the Avonbridge and Standburn district as might be expected, and many local people would welcome having a greater choice of routes for recreation, enjoyment and health. Specific projects that were identified during the consultation include improving the existing core path between Standburn and Muiravonside Country Park and improving equestrian access at Candie Farm. Falkirk Council has expressed a willingness to support such projects, and other candidate locations for creation or upgrading of paths may also emerge.



River Avon Heritage Trail

THEME 4 – BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

4.6 This Theme is primarily about bringing people together - whether that be for learning, activities or companionship - with the outcomes being a more knowledgeable, more closely-knit and happier community with a stronger sense of civic pride. This Theme's actions will take place in the short, middle and long terms.

(b) The River Avon Heritage Trail is a real asset to the district. Several related actions are suggested:

- (i) a partnership with Falkirk Council to upgrade, maintain and improve path links on and off the section of the Trail between Avonbridge and the West Lothian border;
 - (ii) A new visitor orientation point/ interpretation board in Avonbridge village;
 - (iii) a feasibility study into the possibility of extending the Trail westwards to Slamannan (as was originally envisaged when the Trail was created);
 - (iv) engaging with the 'RiverLife: Almond and Avon' project (run by River Forth Fisheries Trust) which aims to reconnect communities and wildlife to their local rivers.
- (c)** Many residents of Avonbridge would like to see the return of **public access to the Lin Falls** beauty spot on the edge of the village. This, whilst desirable, would be a challenging project both financially and logistically, and would also face landowner resistance. This therefore should be regarded as a longer-term aspiration rather than as a firm project.

(a) Avonbridge Community Hall - which already has its own autonomous management committee and is about to pass into full community ownership - is a good but underused asset, and it also now benefits from the on-site presence of the Community Cafe. The committee is already doing a good job in staging events throughout the year, but with some further investment and additional volunteer support, the Hall could become the focal point of community life in the district, acting as a hub for social events and clubs catering for a wide range of ages and activities.

(b) Drumbowie Primary School should also be viewed as a community asset, but in recent times, for whatever reason, the school has almost entirely ceased to be used as a venue for community gatherings - leaving Standburn village without any sort of communal meeting place. This is a situation which could be rectified with the support of Falkirk Council.

(c) Public Library Outreach - Falkirk Community Trust is keen to help Avonbridge and Standburn residents to make more use of its library services, by raising awareness of the regular activities for adults and children being staged at Slamannan Library and also by meeting community representatives to consider how the reach of library services could be extended further, perhaps using Avonbridge Community Hall as a venue.



Drumbowie Primary School

(d) After-school activities and study support

- this idea would aim to assist secondary-aged school pupils from the area to participate more fully in school life, thereby improving their long-term outcomes. At present, the need to catch the school bus home restricts their ability to attend after-hours activities and study support being offered in schools. Additional transport services could allow young people to take advantage of these opportunities.

(e) Training Grants - throughout the life of this Plan, local residents of all ages will be encouraged to apply for the training grants which are available from the EDF-ER Burnhead Moss Education and Training Fund). Grants are available for both full-time and part-time study towards a wide range of qualifications, and at the time of writing, Foundation Scotland was investigating ways in which more potential beneficiaries could be assisted with the application process. A number of local people - for example, staff at the Community Café - have already benefited.

(f) Micro-grants - throughout the life of this Plan, small projects for community benefit can apply for micro-grants of up to £150 (funded via the Community Benefit Fund). Applicants need not be constituted bodies and the application process is straightforward. A number of local groups such as the OAP Lunch Club, Baby and Toddler Group, Avonbridge Community Gardening Club and Standburn Community Park have already benefited.

(g) Avonbridge Playpark Improvements

- perhaps no other single project would unite the Avonbridge community as much as providing better play facilities for children and young people. The current amenities in the public park on Slamannan Road, whilst of reasonable quality, do not meet the needs of many people, the principal shortcomings being

- (i) the lack of play equipment for older children and teenagers;
- (ii) the location - it is somewhat remote from where most families actually live, and can be accessed only by walking alongside the fairly busy Slamannan Road or via a recently-constructed path which, due to its lack of lighting, is perceived as somewhat unsafe after dark; and
- (iii) a multi-use sports court which is impractical for most ball sports due to its low fences.

It is proposed that a new Playpark Action Group, involving Falkirk Council, is set up to

- raise funds to purchase additional equipment and/or sports court fencing in the existing park;
- assess the feasibility of creating an additional new play area for younger children in the Craighbank Road area; and
- campaign for such a new playpark and raise funds for equipment.

(h) Standburn Playpark Improvements - the playpark in Standburn adjacent to Drumbowie Primary School would also benefit from upgraded play equipment.

(i) Festive Lights - small-scale lights displays/Christmas Trees in Avonbridge and Standburn would add some festive cheer at the darkest time of year. This type of project is ideal for partnership working, giving opportunities for public agencies and local companies to provide in-kind support and practical assistance.

THEME 5 - WORKING TOGETHER

4.7 In many ways, this is the Community Plan's overarching Theme. If the Plan is to succeed, ongoing and long-term co-operation and partnership working will be essential. That might mean, for example:

- Local organisations sharing resources to deliver collaborative projects
- Public sector bodies willingly supporting locally-led initiatives
- Individuals putting aside past differences and working together to achieve a common goal
- The Avonbridge and Standburn community being able to speak with a united voice on topics which affect the area.

(a) Developing Partnerships - whenever possible, each of the projects within this Plan - even the smaller ones - should be delivered not by one organisation alone but by an alliance of different groups and individuals. This will help build familiarity and trust, so that, over time, partnership working will become a 'given'. In addition to the aforementioned Falkirk Council and Falkirk Community Trust, the pupils, staff and parents of local schools are potentially an important source of support for the Plan.

(b) Speaking with One Voice - as mentioned previously, there are certain challenges which, whilst of great importance to local quality of life, are too large to be considered within the scope of this modestly-resourced Community Plan. In such instances, the most effective thing the local community can do is speak with a collective voice to lobby the appropriate politicians, service providers and public agencies. Persistent grass-roots campaigning on the issues which matter most to local people can make a difference. For example, lobbying campaigns might be considered for better bus services, the extension of mobile phone coverage, and the speedier roll-out of superfast broadband (though in the latter case, progress is being made, with further properties in the area being connected during late 2017).

Standburn © Catch the moment - Photography by Sandy





SECTION 5 - NEXT STEPS

- 5.1** With the publication of this document, Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council's working party has completed its job, and ownership now passes to the community at large.

What happens next?

(a) Publicising and Implementing the proposed projects and activities

- in the first instance, the proposals contained herein should be well publicised locally, so that residents and stakeholders are aware of them. This document will be published in full online, with printed copies made available at local community meeting places. A summarised version will be printed as a leaflet and circulated widely within the local area. This publicity process should help to further identify individuals and groups (both existing and new) who can take ownership of the various individual projects.

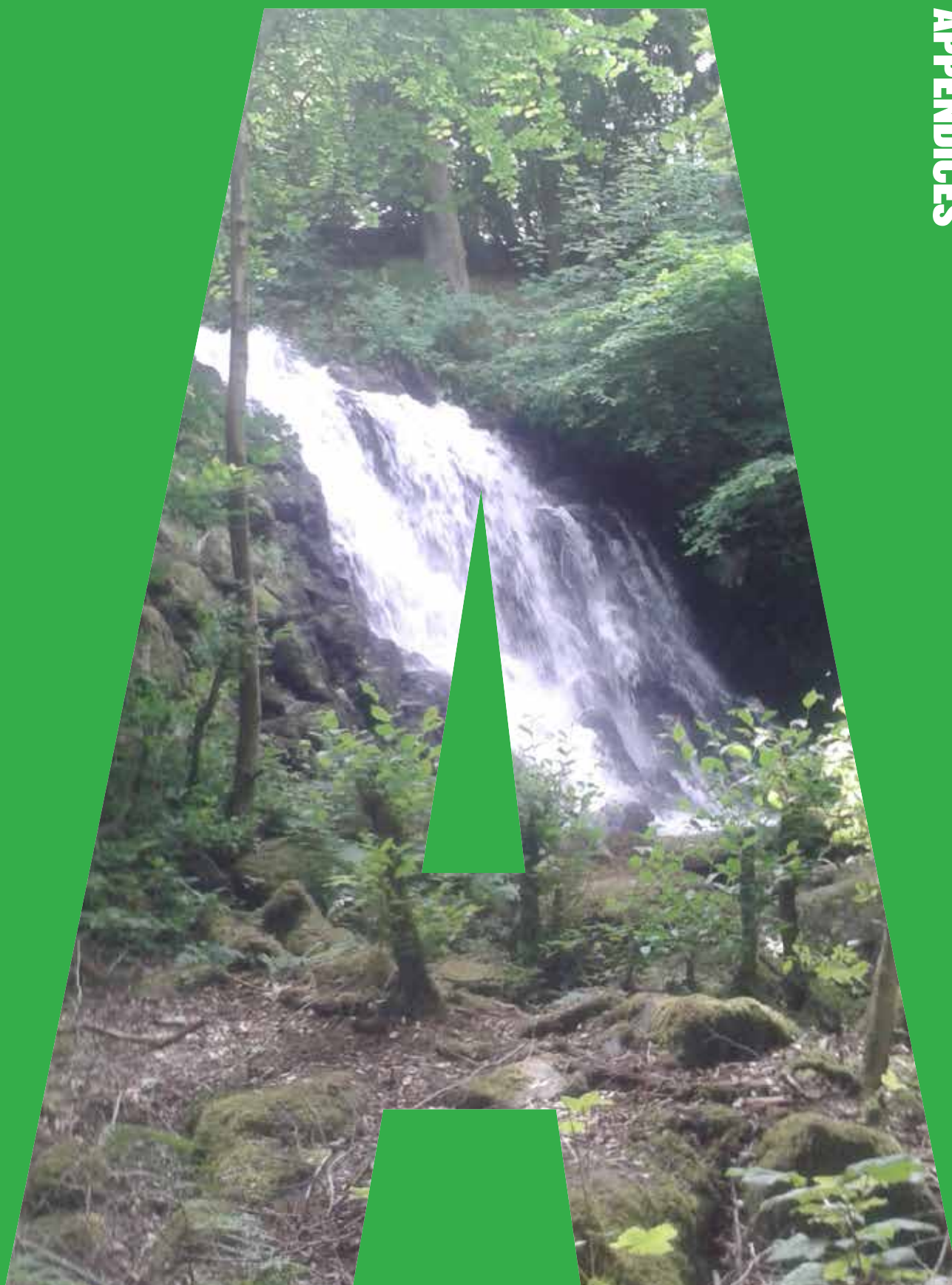
(b) Bringing People Together - it

would seem likely that a community meeting, or series of meetings, will then be needed so that people with an interest in particular projects can make themselves known to each other and begin developing plans to help take these forward. Some projects might be adopted by existing groups or clubs; some might require a new group to be formed. It is not for this document to be prescriptive about the mechanisms to be adopted - that will be for the community itself to decide.

- (c) Finding the Resources** - a wealth of advice, assistance and support is available for volunteer groups working to improve their communities. For example, CVS in Falkirk offers training and can help volunteers to start-up, write a constitution and run their project group; Falkirk Council's Community Learning and Development staff could also help in these areas. Foundation Scotland is the first port of call for EDF Burnhead Moss Community Benefit funding and can also advise on general funding matters; Falkirk Environment Trust is another local source of funding and advice.

Bridgehill, Avonbridge





APPENDIX A - METHODOLOGY

- A.1** This section describes the consultation work carried out between late May and August 2017.
- A.2** The process began with an inception meeting with the Community Council's project group at Avonbridge on 9 May. This allowed the consultants to gain a fuller understanding of the scope of work required and the Community Council's aspirations for the project. One challenge evident from the outset was that the project timescale would be challenging - all of the research, public consultations, analysis and report writing would have to be carried out in a period of less than four months, spanning the summer holiday period.
- A.3** The consultants' work began with the production of a suite of public consultation materials including a leaflet/questionnaire (see Appendix B), a local press release (see Appendix C), an online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey which used the same questions as the leaflet version, and a dedicated Community Plan Facebook page. Two four-hour public drop-in sessions were also arranged - one at Avonbridge Community Hall on 19 June and the other at Drumbowie Primary School on 20 June - as was a focus group for teenagers, arranged in conjunction with Braes High School on 20 June. A series of 'conversation prompt' posters and a pop-up banner were produced for all these events.
- A.4** The secretaries (or equivalent) of 15 local clubs and organisations (details of which had been provided by the Community Council), together with the three ward councillors on Falkirk Council, were all contacted directly, inviting them to provide their views directly to the consultants and/or encourage their members to complete the questionnaires.
- A.5** Copies of the printed leaflet/questionnaire were hand-delivered to each household in the Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council area on 27 and 28 May (there are an estimated 580 households in the area). Copies were also displayed at Avonbridge Post Office and Avonbridge Community Café. Respondents were able to return completed questionnaires to either the Post Office or Standburn Primary School. A total of 36 printed questionnaires were returned by the survey closing date (26 June). The quality of responses was very good, with a majority of respondents answering all of the nine questions asked.
- A.6** The online survey had a total of 42 respondents and the quality of responses received was even better - almost all respondents answered each of the nine questions asked.
- A.7** The findings from the 78 printed and online questionnaires which were returned are provided in Appendix B. The views of those who took part in other ways, such as drop-in sessions, are reflected in Section 3 below).

A.8 The Community Plan Facebook page was not well used. Though as many as 380 people viewed individual posts (which were shared by other Facebook pages such as Avonbridge Hall, the Community Council, Avonbridge Community Café and Falkirk News & Events) there was not a great deal of interaction with the page. Nevertheless, now that the page has been set up, it could be a useful means of communication, helping disseminate the Community Plan once it is finalised.

A.9 The public drop-in sessions attracted a total of 15 members of the public (12 at Avonbridge, 3 at Standburn). Though these numbers are low, the level of engagement was very high - the average length of stay was over 20 minutes, with those attending being very willing to share their ideas and opinions.

A.10 The young people's focus group was very successful. Eight pupils of different ages attended; at an earlier session in the school, they had considered the questions being asked in the survey, and this meant that on the day of the focus group they were already well briefed and eager to participate from the outset. Over the course of an 80-minute session, some excellent ideas and insights were shared.



Leaflet delivery

A.11 In total, therefore, there were 112 local participants during the consultation period. A few of these will have been duplicates (e.g. people who completed the survey and also attended a drop-in session) but even taking this into account, it is estimated that between 80 and 90 of the area's households took part - a sample size of 14-15%. The consultants feel that this is a large enough percentage to provide findings which are robust and reliable.

A.12 Following the initial consultation period, a number of respondents who had expressed a willingness to be contacted again were all approached individually during August 2017, either to expand on the opinions they had expressed or to become more involved with the Community Plan's development. Via this route, an informal 'sounding board panel' was set up, with these individuals and organisations given the chance to comment on the draft version of the Plan - as was the Community Council's working group.

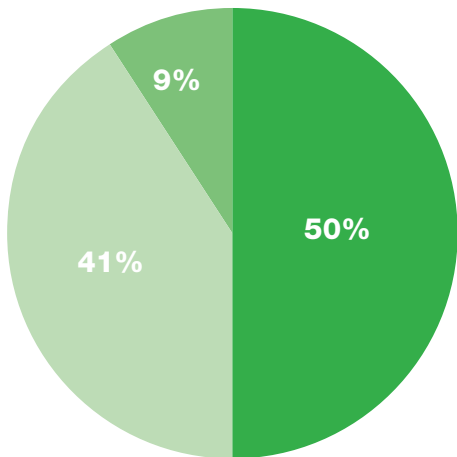
APPENDIX B - PUBLIC CONSULTATION SURVEY RESULTS

This appendix sets out the findings from the 78 printed and online questionnaires which were returned during June 2017 (the views of those who participated in other ways such as drop-in sessions are reflected in Section 2 of the Plan).

Q.1 - Where do you live?

Avonbridge Village	50%
Standburn Village.....	9%
Rural part of the area	41%

When compared to the population spread in the area, the number of responses from Standburn village is disproportionately low and the number of responses from the rural area is disproportionately high.



Q. 2 - Household Composition

Pre-school children in household	8%
School-age children in household.....	31%
Young adults in household	5%
One or more adults aged 60 or under, no children in household	28%
One or more adults aged over 60, no children in household	23%
Other.....	5%

When compared to census data, the number of responses from households with children is proportionately high. This is perhaps reflected in the answers given to questions 5 and 6 below, with a large number of respondents suggesting projects which would benefit children/young people.

Q.3 - What do you most like about living in this area? (Multiple answers possible, so total does not add up to 100%)

Rural nature/countryside/peacefulness.....	65%
Friendly local people/good neighbours.....	40%
The scenery/beauty of the landscape	26%
A central location for commuting/travelling.....	26%
Wildlife/nature.....	10%
A safe place to live/low crime rate	10%
Walks and other outdoor activities.....	9%
Reasonable property prices	5%
Good school	5%
Village shops/other facilities.....	5%
Clean air/no pollution	4%
Privacy.....	4%
Village Park.....	3%
Few new-build homes	2%

RURAL NATURE/COUNTRYSIDE/PEACEFULNESS 65%



Q.4 – What you most dislike about living here? (Multiple answers possible, so total does not add up to 100%)

Litter/fly-tipping/dog mess	32%
Speeding vehicles/poor driving	27%
Poor/expensive bus services	15%
Poor broadband	14%
Antisocial behaviour/crime	12%
Little for young people to do	12%
Poor quality of minor roads	12%
Poor appearance of household gardens	8%
Lack of council services	8%
Lack of shops/restaurants	6%
Not enough accessible country walks	6%
It is a very small place, remote from amenities	6%
Not enough community spirit/ social activities/clubs	5%
Poor playpark(s)	5%
Poor mobile phone reception	4%
No mains gas	4%
Unreliable utilities	4%
Proliferation of wind turbines/ phone masts	4%
Some people are unfriendly	3%
Sectarianism	3%
Schools too small/poor	3%
Lack of housing	2%
No easy access to doctors	2%
Run-down villages	2%
Drumbowie Park Group	2%
Smell from sludge spreading	2%
Unmaintained farm fencing	2%
Autograss racing	2%
Cost of taxis	2%

Q.5 - What amenities and facilities do you feel this area lacks and could reasonably be expected to have?

Better-equipped play park(s)	23%
Better-maintained roads/traffic calming	18%
Better bus services	17%
Youth facilities	17%
More and better-promoted country footpaths	14%
Fibre broadband	10%
Sports facilities	8%
More shops	6%
A food takeaway food shop	6%
Community hall or similar in Standburn	5%
Mains gas	4%
Good mobile telephone signal	4%
A library	3%
More litter bins	3%
Start-up industrial units	3%
Off-road horse riding/carriage driving	3%
A decent pub	2%
More dog bins	2%
Facilities for anglers	2%
Village Garden Competition	2%
A dentist	2%
A public toilet	2%
More bin collections	2%
Festive lights	2%
New houses	2%
Local education/training	2%
A full-strength Community Council	2%
An attractive central area in Avonbridge	2%
A keep-fit class	2%
A Gala Day or similar	2%

Q.6 - How would you like to see existing public amenities improved?

Relocate/improve playparks.....	23%
Better/cheaper bus services	12%
Upgrade paths and pavements.....	10%
More litter picking.....	6%
Village 'beautification'	6%
Upgrade Community Hall.....	5%
Extend/maintain Avon Heritage Trail	5%
Upgrade healthcare provision	4%
New pavements.....	3%
Fibre optic broadband.....	3%
Indoor youth facility	3%
Traffic calming	3%
Car park at Community Hall.....	3%
More use made of Community Hall.....	3%
More shops	3%
Re-open hot food takeaway.....	3%
More use made of church hall	2%
Education classes/tutors.....	2%
A recycling facility.....	2%
Upgrade Drumbowie School	2%
Tennis court	2%
Cycle lanes	2%

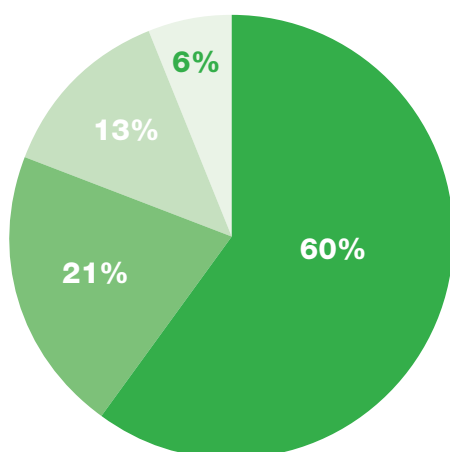
Q.7 - What do you find particularly challenging about living here?

Poor and expensive bus services.....	22%
Traffic speeds	17%
Poor broadband	8%
Litter/fly-tipping	8%
Roads are bad in winter	8%
Lack of country footpaths	5%
Falkirk Council services.....	4%
Poor mobile phone signal.....	4%
No shops	4%
Nothing to do	3%
Road quality	3%
Sectarianism.....	3%
Lack of housing	3%
Antisocial behaviour	3%
Unwelcoming people.....	2%
No pharmacy.....	2%
Trail bikes.....	2%
'Pedal for Scotland' event.....	2%
Standburn pavements.....	2%
Inconsiderate car parking.....	2%
Sludge smell.....	2%
Blocked drains	2%
No mains gas	2%
Poor refuse collection.....	2%
Lack of community spirit	2%

Q.8 - How long have you lived in the area?

Less than 1 year	6%
1-5 years	21%
6-10 years	13%
Over 10 years.....	60%

Most respondents are long-term residents in the area. There were no clear correlations between length of residency and the answers given to earlier questions - with the notable exception that those who had lived in the area for over 10 years were much more likely to raise the issue of road safety/traffic speeds.



Q.9 - If you were granted a single wish which would improve life for everyone in the area, what would you wish for?

Fibre broadband	14%
Traffic calming	13%
No litter	8%
More civic pride/community spirit	6%
New/linked country paths	5%
A new community hall/social hub	5%
A sports/activity area for all	4%
Tidier domestic gardens.....	4%
A skate park	4%
A better playpark	4%
Improved public transport	4%
Better pavements	3%
A shop in Standburn	3%
Public realm improvements in Avonbridge	3%
Horse riding/carriage driving facilities	3%
Mains gas	3%
Community Café open in evenings	%
A path to Lin Falls.....	2%
New road bridge over Avon Gorge.....	2%
High fence around sport court	2%
No more trail bikes	2%
Better housing stock	2%
No overload of new houses.....	2%
Better roads.....	2%
More help for newcomers in the community.....	2%
A community all are proud of	2%

APPENDIX C - PUBLIC CONSULTATION LEAFLET / QUESTIONNAIRE



**YOUR CHANCE TO HELP
SHAPE THE FUTURE
OF AVONBRIDGE AND
STANDBURN**

**BETWEEN NOW AND 24 JUNE 2017,
WE'RE ASKING EVERYONE FOR THEIR
VIEWS ABOUT HOW LIFE IN THIS AREA
COULD BE IMPROVED IN FUTURE.**

Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council is planning to produce a new Community Plan, and wants to give everyone who live locally the chance to have an input.

What exactly is a 'Community Plan'?

- It's a document which describes the community's current situation, but more importantly, sets out local people's vision for the future.
- It'll be created and 'owned' entirely by local people - this will be **our** Plan, not Falkirk Council's or anybody else's!
- It'll include a range of short, medium and long-term goals and actions, reflecting what local people feel are the most important priorities for this area over the next 20 years.
- The Plan will guide how money from the recently established EDF-ER Burnhead Moss Wind Farm Community Fund is allocated - this fund will provide around **£35,000 annually** to Avonbridge and Standburn for many years to come.
- The Plan will be actively used by local people and organisations to support other funding applications, projects and activities.

Please tell us what you think!

Now's your chance to get involved by providing your thoughts and ideas. Your input will directly shape the content of the Community Plan - so please tell us anything and everything. Hopefully, most of your ideas will be positive, but it is important that we also know about problems as well!

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Help plan the future of your local community by completing this short survey (9 questions). It should only take a maximum of 10 minutes and is totally anonymous - you will not be identifiable unless you choose to give your contact details at the end of the survey. The survey is being conducted on behalf of Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council by GWCMS Ltd, Tel 07905 857250. **Thanks for taking part!**

- Where do you live?**
 - ☐ In Avonbridge village
 - ☐ In Standburn village
 - ☐ In a rural part of the area
 - ☐ In another area completely (please specify where)
- Please describe your household composition**
 - ☐ One or more adults aged 60 or under (no children at home)
 - ☐ Family with school-age children living at home
 - ☐ Family with over-16s living at home
 - ☐ One or more adults aged over 60 (no children at home)
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
- What do you most like about living in this area?**
(please state your top three likes)
- And what, if anything, do you most dislike about living here?** (please give up to three answers)
- What, if any, amenities and facilities do you feel this area lacks and could reasonably be expected to have?** (please list up to three)
- And now, thinking about the public amenities which are already in place here, how would you like to see them improved?**
- Are there any aspects of living in the Avonbridge and Standburn area which you find particularly challenging?**
- How long have you lived in the Avonbridge and Standburn area?**
 - ☐ Less than a year
 - ☐ 1-5 years
 - ☐ 6-10 years
 - ☐ More than 10 years
- And finally, if you were granted just one wish which would improve life for everyone in this area, what would you wish for?**

Please insert any other comments below. If you are willing to be contacted to discuss your ideas, please leave contact details below.

You can contact us in several ways:

- **Complete the short survey form** overleaf (this can be done anonymously if you prefer) and hand it in to the Mini Market/Post Office in Avonbridge or Drumbowie Primary School **by Monday 24 June at latest.**
- **Complete the survey form online** - the link is on the Facebook page below (you don't have to have a Facebook account to click through to the survey) or you can access it directly:
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TMGPP32>.
The survey closes on Monday 24 June, so don't delay!
- **Add a comment on Facebook:**
fb.me/ASCommunityPlan
- **Come along for a chat** - we'll be holding informal drop-in sessions at Avonbridge Community Hall on Monday 19 June, 3.30-7.30pm and at Drumbowie Primary School on Tuesday 20 June, 3.30-7.30pm.

This community consultation is being conducted on behalf of Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council by Falkirk-based firm GWCMS Ltd, who will be happy to answer any enquiries by phone - 07905 857250. The study is being funded entirely by the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) - see localenergyscotland.org for details.
Photo credits: Avon Valley and Campsie Fells by Gene Selkov <http://bit.ly/2ra4355>, Avonbridge Waterfall by Alan Weir <http://bit.ly/2qL50K>, both under Creative Commons Licence Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)

APPENDIX D - LOCAL NEWS RELEASE

Monday 12 June 2017- for immediate use

Avonbridge and Standburn folk urged to help plan their own future

Residents in Avonbridge, Standburn and surrounding rural areas are being urged to get involved in a public consultation process which will lead to a new Community Plan for the area, to be produced this summer.

The ambitious programme is being driven by Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council, which, with 100% funding support from the Scottish Government's CARES scheme, has engaged Falkirk-based consultants GWCMS Ltd to carry out the consultation exercise and then prepare the Community Plan.

The new Plan will reflect local people's wishes and priorities for the area in which they live and work, firstly addressing issues which affect people's lives at present, but also looking forward as much as 20 years to the needs of the next generation.

Importantly, the Plan's contents will guide how money from the recently-established EDF-ER Burnhead Moss Wind Farm Community Fund is allocated. This fund will provide around £35,000 annually to Avonbridge and Standburn for many years to come.

Every household in the area has already received copies of an explanatory leaflet and survey form, but there are also other ways in which residents can have their say (anonymously if preferred):

- Completing a short online survey:
<http://bit.ly/2sTmDde>
- Leaving comments on the dedicated Facebook page:
[fb.me/ASCommunityPlan](https://www.facebook.com/ASCommunityPlan)
- Coming along to one of two drop-in sessions planned: at
Avonbridge Community Hall on Monday 19 June, 3.30-7.30pm, or
Drumbowie Primary School on Tuesday 20 June, 3.30-7.30pm.

The public consultation process ends on Saturday 24 June, so residents are being asked to submit their thoughts and ideas in the near future.

YOUNG OUR AVONBRIDGE & STANBURN COMMUNITY